

REGULAR ORIGINAL FILING

Application Based on

Docket **86064PCW**

Inventors: Joseph R. Summa, Herbert J. Erhardt
Customer No. 01333

**INTERLINE CCD IMPLEMENTATION OF HYBRID TWO COLOR
PER PIXEL ARCHITECTURE**

Commissioner for Patents,
ATTN: MAIL STOP PATENT APPLICATION
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA. 22313-1450

Express Mail Label No.: EV293511101US

Date: September 17, 2003

**INTERLINE CCD IMPLEMENTATION OF HYBRID TWO COLOR PER
PIXEL ARCHITECTURE**

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The invention relates generally to the field of transfer gates for image sensors and, more particularly, to a transfer gate having a plurality of transfer voltage levels so that adjacent photosensitive areas can be selectively transferred to associated charge-coupled devices.

10 **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

Current image sensors use a variety of methods for creating color separation. One such method uses the differences in absorption length in silicon of light of different wavelengths for color separation, such as in US Patents 5,965,875 and 4,613,895. In this regard, the incoming light is stored in separate regions of the substrate according to its wavelength, and the pixels are arranged so that each pixel receives each color at distinct depths of the silicon.

15 Another method of producing color separation in image sensors uses color filter arrays. In this regard, color filters are placed over the image sensor, and the color filter separates the incoming light so that particular colors are directed onto particular portions of the image sensor, such as is used in the well-known Bayer pattern. In this arrangement, each pixel receives only one color so that interpolation is needed when the entire image is created therefrom.

20 In co-pending U.S. Application Serial No. 10/636,410, filed August 7, 2003, titled HYBRID TWO COLOR PER PIXEL ARCHITECTURE
25 USING BOTH COLOR FILTER MATERIALS AND WAVELENGTH DEPENDENT SILICON ABSORPTION, by Summa, the above methods are combined so that one photosensitive area receives each color at predefined depths.

25 Although the above method is satisfactory, they include drawbacks. Color cross-talk is an undesirable inherent feature of the above methods.
30 Therefore, an apparatus and method are needed for overcoming the above drawback.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to overcoming one or more of the problems set forth above. Briefly summarized, according to one aspect of the present invention, the invention resides in an image sensor having (a) at least first and second photo-sensitive regions; (b) a color filter array having at least two different colors that selectively absorb specific bands of wavelengths, and the two colors respectively span portions of predetermined photo-sensitive regions; and wherein the two photo sensitive regions are doped so that electrons that are released at two different depths in the substrate are collected in two separate regions of the photo sensitive regions so that, when wavelengths of light pass through the color filter array, light is absorbed by the photo sensitive regions which photo sensitive regions consequently releases electrons at two different depths of the photo sensitive regions and are stored in first and second separate regions; (c) at least two charge-coupled devices adjacent the first photo sensitive regions; and (d) a first transfer gate associated with the first photo sensitive region that selectively passes charge at first and second levels which, when at the first level, causes the charge stored in the first region to be passed to one of its associated charge-coupled devices, and when the transfer gate is at the second level, charge stored in the second region is passed to one of the associated charge-coupled devices.

These and other aspects, objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be more clearly understood and appreciated from a review of the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments and appended claims, and by reference to the accompanying drawings.

25

Advantageous Effect Of The Invention

The present invention has the advantage of substantially preventing cross-talk.

30

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a top view of an image sensor of the present invention with an illustrated of its typical captured electrons;

Fig. 2 is a top view of a portion of pixels of the image sensor of the present invention of Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is an alternative embodiment of Fig. 2;

Fig. 4 is an alternative embodiment of Fig. 3; and

5 Fig. 5 is an alternative embodiment of Fig. 4.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring to Fig. 1, there is shown a top and side view of an image sensor of the present invention. The image sensor includes a color filter array 10 positioned covering a silicon substrate 20. The color filter 10 separates the incoming light into substantially distinct portions according to its wavelength so that different colors are absorbed at different wavelengths. In the preferred embodiment, a color filter 10 having an alternating pattern of magenta 30 and green 40 is used so that each pixel respectively receives the light permitted by its respective color filter, magenta and green filter in this embodiment. In this regard, the magenta 30 transmits the blue and red incoming light, and the silicon substrate releases electrons at different depths in the substrate and stores them at different charge locations respectively 50 and 60. The green filter 40 transmits the green light and the silicon substrate 20 releases electrons at a depth different or the same as the blue and red depth in the substrate and stores it at one or more charge locations 70.

Referring to Fig. 2, there is shown a top view of a plurality of pixels 80 of the image sensor of Fig. 1. Although only two pixels are shown, an image sensor includes an array of such pixels as is well known in the art. Each 25 pixel 80 includes a photo sensitive area 90 adjacent to two charge-coupled devices 100. A transfer gate 110 spans a portion of the photo sensitive area 90 for transferring charge from the photo sensitive area 90 to their respective charge-coupled devices 100. In operation, the transfer gate 110a is energized at a first voltage level, for example +5 volts, for transferring the charge 50 (for example 30 blue charge) in the photosensitive area 90a to its associated charge-coupled device 100a. The transfer gate 110a is energized at a second voltage level, for example +8 volts, for transferring charge 60 (for example red charge) from the photo

sensitive area 90 to its associated charge coupled-device 100b. The other pixel 80b operates in substantially the same manner except that, when the transfer gate 110b is activated at the two different voltage levels, the charge 70 representative of only one color (for example green) is sequentially transferred from the photo
5 sensitive area 90b to the same charge-couple device 100c.

The charge-coupled devices are then sequentially activated and de-activated for transferring the charge to a horizontal transfer mechanism (not shown), as is well known in the art.

Referring to Fig. 3, there is shown an alternative embodiment of
10 Fig. 2. In this embodiment, pixel 80b is substantially the same except that the photosensitive area 90b is mated with two charge-coupled devices 100c and 100d. In this regard, the transfer gate 110b is sequentially energized at two different levels which, when at the first voltage, causes transfer of one charge 70 from the photosensitive area 90b to the charge-coupled device 100c. When the transfer
15 gate 110b is energized at the second voltage level, the remaining charge 70 is transferred to charge-coupled device 100d.

Again, the charge-coupled devices 100 are then sequentially activated and de-activated for transferring the charge to a horizontal transfer mechanism (not shown), as is well known in the art.

20 Referring to Fig. 4, there is shown an alternative embodiment of Fig. 3. In this embodiment, the pixels 80 are the same as in Fig. 3 except that two transfer gates 110 are mated with each photosensitive area 90. In operation, instead of one transfer gate 110 being energized at two different levels, two transfer gates 110 are respectively and sequentially energized at the two different
25 voltage levels. For example, for photo sensitive area 90a, transfer gates 110a and 110c are sequentially energized at two different levels for sequentially passing the charge 50 and 60 respectively to the charge-coupled devices 100a and 100b. Similarly, for photo sensitive area 90b, transfer gates 110b and 110d are sequentially energized at two different levels for sequentially passing the charge
30 70 respectively to the charge-coupled devices 100c and 100d. These charges are then passed to the horizontal transfer mechanism as described hereinabove.

Referring to Fig. 5, there is shown an alternative embodiment of Fig. 4. In this embodiment, it is the same as the embodiment of Fig. 4 except that photo sensitive area 90b is mated with one charge-coupled device 100c. Photo sensitive area 90a is the same as in Fig. 4, and photo sensitive area 90b transfers its two stored charge 70 sequentially to charge-coupled device 100c when transfer gates 110b and 110d is sequentially energized.

The invention has been described with reference to a preferred embodiment. However, it will be appreciated that variations and modifications can be effected by a person of ordinary skill in the art without departing from the scope of the invention.

PARTS LIST

- 10 color filter array
- 20 silicon substrate
- 30 magenta
- 40 green
- 50 charge location
- 60 charge location
- 70 charge location
- 80 plurality of pixels
- 90 photo sensitive areas
- 100 charge-coupled devices
- 110 transfer gates